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ABSTRACT

The International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) enables young people (ages 5-19) to use the Internet and other new technologies to engage in collaborative online educational projects that both enhance learning and address issues of global importance. More than 400,000 students in over 95 countries are working together in iEARN to make a positive impact on the world. This document highlights project examples that profile a variety of age levels, curricula, and areas in which iEARN has an impact. In "Building Bridges," a headmistress from Pakistan describes her school's experience of learning with partners from 92 countries in the "Laws of Life Project." Ideas for "globalizing" the classroom are offered. The next section, "Improving Education," describes the "Write To Care Framework: Writing and Reading Integrating Technology into Education To Make a Difference in Our World." The purpose of this framework is to encourage children's literacy skill development while participating in meaningful local to global telecommunications projects that make positive differences in their school, community, region, state, country, and around the world. In the next section, "Making a Difference," students worldwide share their environmental projects through the YouthCAN environmental conference. Also included are: sample activity for generating project ideas; suggestions for successful project work; iEARN professional development opportunities; and a list of additional resources. (AEF)

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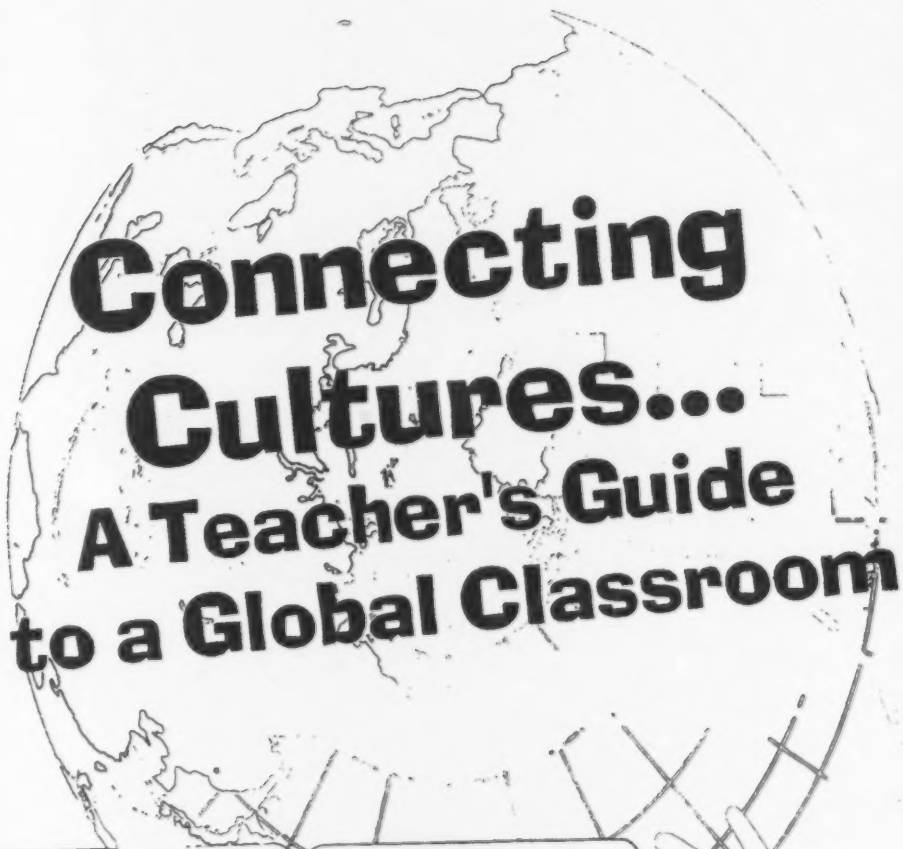

Connecting Cultures...

A Teacher's Guide to a Global Classroom

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Knowledge about the culture and language of our neighbors throughout the world is becoming increasingly important in the daily lives of all Americans. The events surrounding the terrorist attacks of September 11 underscore that point. For our students, international education means learning about the history, geography, literature and arts of other countries, acquiring proficiency in a second language, and understanding complex global issues. It means having opportunities to experience other cultures, whether through study abroad, exposure to diversity in their own communities, or through classroom-to-classroom Internet connections with students in schools in other nations.

The U.S. Department of Education supports international education programs in our schools, colleges and universities that build high levels of worldwide understanding and expertise. For our nation to continue to engage other nations effectively, we need to give our students at all levels an international education that meets the highest standards.

-U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, November 2001

For additional resources on global project work, see "*The Teacher's Guide to International Collaboration on the Internet*," created by iEARN for the U.S. Department of Education, and available at http://www.ed.gov/Technology/guide/international/index.html.

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iEARN

International Education and Resource Network

Following the tide of recent domestic and international conflict and violence, iEARN has received an outpouring of interest among US students and educators to learn more about, and engage in **collaborative projects** with, peers in other countries.

IEARN's work is focused on **building bridges**, **improving education**, and **making a difference in the world**.

Operating in over 95 countries, including many of those in today's headlines, iEARN is uniquely positioned to build **communication** and **bridges** of understanding between the children who will inherit the legacies of September 11th.

The need for global community right now is great. In the following pages, you will find just a few examples of the kinds of projects in which teachers and students are relating school curricula to the world around them. You will see projects that are increasing motivation and **learning**, while making a positive difference in the world. And, we hope you will see the incredible potential in these youth who are developing **global understanding** and compassion as part of their learning.

We encourage you to contact us if there are ways that we can support your work to build peace, tolerance, and a spirit of global collaboration into your **teaching**.

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All iEARN projects build bridges, improve education, and make a difference. In order to demonstrate how, we are highlighting project examples that profile a variety of age levels, curricula , and areas in which iEARN has an impact.

- For additional project examples, see http://www.iearn.org/projects/
- For additional activites and ideas for getting started, see the iEARN handbook at http://www.iearn.org/professional/prof_handbook.html

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Building Bridges

The Laws of Life Project *invites young people to express in their own words what they value most in life. Participants interact with each other online. In addition, they are encouraged to use what they learned about values to initiate change within the community through action projects.*

Current participants include students from Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkino Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Russia, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, and the United States. For more information, including a Teacher's Guide and sample essays, see http://www.iearn.org/projects/laws.html. The Laws of Life Project was initiated through support from the John Templeton Foundation.

Following is one school's experience in the project.

Globalizing the Values of Life -- Making the world a better place to live.

By Farah S. Kamal, SMS Aga Khan Secondary School, Pakistan

"Make yourself involved in linking with people of different countries, have knowledge about their culture, ethics and about their lifestyle."
-(HRH Prince Karim Aga Khan)

THE PROJECT BACKGROUND:

"I knew about the values important to life but I seldom applied them in my real life before the Laws of Life Project."
"I have realized that the Laws of Life in almost all culture are similar."
-students of the Aga Khan Schools in Karachi, Pakistan

Laws of Life is an iEARN project which provides students and teachers an opportunity to investigate their own values ("laws of life"), test them in a real-life situation, then communicate and share what they have learned with other students around the world in writing in the form of a short essay. Laws of Life project activities focus on students as the most potent source of change. The project brings a paradigm shift in the classroom, exposing students to the process of reading and writing that is focused on making a positive difference to themselves, their families and societies at large. In addition to communicating in writing, students are also encouraged to enrich and enhance their learning and written-communication skills using some "right brain", creative methodology employing the Arts i.e. drawing, poetry, painting, sculpture, film, on-line animations, music, movement, etc.

From a student: *"We have spend sometime discussing about the values important to us and writing about them. This has actually helped us follow these values in real life as well.'* One teacher added to this *"Knowing about a value and implementing it in real life is different. This project has helped students also implement the values in their daily life".*

EDUCATIONAL GOALS:

The students participating in the project laws of life:

- experienced the humanity of children in different cultures and countries.
- learned the confidence to make a difference.
- experienced increased motivation to learn.
- had greater motivation to use computer technology and the Internet for learning.
- experienced compassion for others and oneself.
- enhanced the joy of communication using "right and left brain" modalities.

Apart from the above mentioned affective goals students particpating in Laws of Life achieved a number of cognitive goals. As the students participated in Laws of Life, they:

- improved writing skills (composition, organization, articulation) and "right brain" communication skills.
- gained knowledge about the similarity and differences among different cultures of the world.
- learned to use computer technology and the Internet in order to enhance educational outcomes.
- discovered and understood their own values and "laws of life".
- learned methodologies to make their values real in the world.
- understood how to make a difference in the world.

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...nothing is as strong as gentleness, or as gentle as strength. And, by staying gentle and creating friendship, one day we would be able to build bridges among the nations. -Misbah Ali Raza. iEARN Student. Pakistan

Examples of Classroom Activities:

a. Students write 1-3 of their values or laws of life which they think are most important and why they are important.

b. Students share these values in small groups.

c. The class can vote on the most compelling presentations.

d. Students are then asked to apply one or more of their values/LOL in the real world.

e. Students share what they have learned in small groups and with the entire class. (Remember that failure is not fatal -- failure is feedback. For example, a student's value is "caring". The student goes home and tries to do something caring with their brother or sister. However, their caring is rebuffed and not appreciated. Some useful learning questions might be: "When you do something good for another person and they don't respond the way you like, who is responsible for their behavior? Do you quit when you don't get the response you like? Do you think people doing good things should stop doing them just because some people react negatively? What might you do differently next time?" etc.)

f. Students are asked to write their essay including not only their values/LOL, but their experience with applying them in the real world, what they learned or relearned, and what might they do differently in the future.

g. Students may then enrich and enhance their essay with some form of creative/artistic communication.

h. Students communicate their projects online in iEARN's Laws of Life forum.

i. The projects will be posted on the web and/or made into hard-copy publications.

j. Students can make displays for their school and community.

k. Teachers can share what they learned on iEARN's "Teachers" forum.

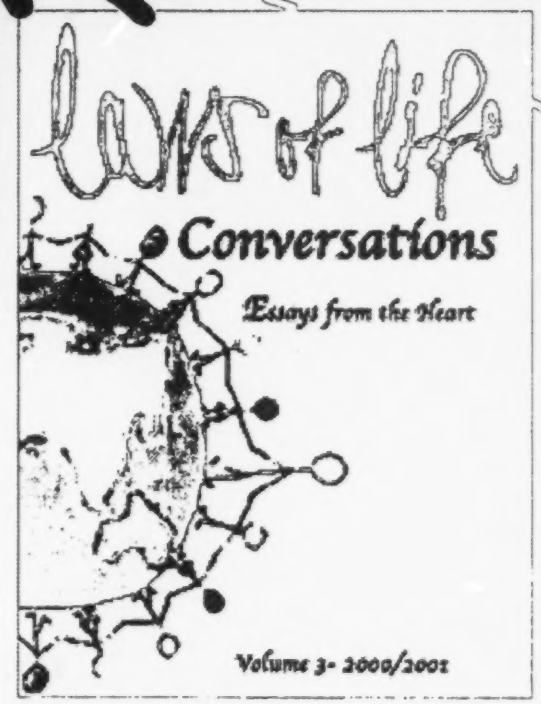
Laws of Life: A Meaningful Learning Experience:

The nature of Laws of Life or to say of other iEARN projects has helped educators provide a variety of learning experiences through a single project. Through involvement in Laws of Life, students were involved in exploring, observing, recording, constructing , problem solving, sharing, discussing, hypothesizing, predicting, co-operating and understanding.

Students working on these projects worked more closely in groups, and researched various resources rather than textbooks only. The Laws of Life students had a unique experience of learning by extensive class and online discussions, group work, critically thinking about values and collaborating with communities within and outside the school, exchanging views from different countries and cultures was of particular interest to all. One student expressed "*I made so many friends from all around the world sometimes we decide on topics to write together and share with each other.*"

The students who participated in the Laws of Life project felt that they had a real reason to write, and the idea that there would be someone responding to their work incredibly raised their motivation to communicate and learn about others globally. As students write for a real audience outside the classroom, a marked difference is evident in the way students present their work. The use of computer applications like MS Word, Print Artist, and Publisher 2000 reflects creativity and sophistications. The students working on

Building Bridges



decision in selecting applications for presenting their work, and felt confident and proud of their abilities and had greater ownership of the finished work. The English head of the Department commented *"Now I see a range of style and ideas in the way these students are presenting their work. They have written exceptionally high quality essays, and their presentation is impressive"*.The various activities that students and teachers are engaged in through Laws of Life provides them opportunity and power to exchange ideas, opinions, research, experience, data, expertise and art work expressing the values important to them and learning about each other through these expressions. A student said *"I concluded that values are similar in most of the cultures and religion only people observe it in different ways."* They have the opportunity to compare the values people give importance in different cultures. Further, the students try to implement their Laws of Life and exchange their experiences with their classmates and with peers and experts globally.

Through the Laws of Life Project, students and teachers around the world are able to share and learn from each other through the on-line and hard-copy compilation of student essays. Of equal importance is that students have the experience of applying their values in the real world, giving them the experience of compassionate action and help building a future of compassionate adults in the world.

Tolerance: A Value Important in All Religions

The word tolerance has come from the word tolerate which means to have sympathy, love and endurance with each other. Every religion teaches us to tolerate whether it is Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrian, Judaism, Hinduism or whatever you name them teaches us to have harmony, understanding, and tolerance and love each other.

The essence of all the religion is "To err is human, to forgive is Divine" So it is clear that every religion teaches us to tolerate and to have spirit of humanity among each other. It teaches us to help every one or we can say: "Help ever, Hurt never." So we should always help others even if he or she is not of our own but we should always stay gentle because: "Nothing is as strong as gentleness, Or as gentle as strength." And by staying gentle and creating friendship one day we would be able to build bridges among the nations. Our world would become a peaceful place and let me tell you that: "Friendship is the gold thread that ties hearts together."

So why should we fight? We should create friendship, understand each other if we really want to make our world a better place to live. Let us join hands to build a bridge of love and affection.

-Misbah Ali Raza, Karachi, Pakistan

All iEARN projects are designed to build bridges between youth worldwide. See http://www.iearn/projects/ for more examples, including:

Africa the Early Fires. Students from all over Africa gather collections, both oral and written histories on pre-colonial Africa, so that people all over the world will be able to use the material in secondary school history and social studies classes. http://www.iearn.org/projects/africaearlyfires.html

Balkan Voices - The Balkans in Our Eyes. A multilingual project bringing together teachers and students throughout the Balkan region to explore their history, culture, teen life, dream school ideas, etc. http://www.iearn.org/projects/balkanvoices.html

CIVICS (Community Voices, Collaborative Solutions). Students and educators in Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the U.S. engage in dialogue and project collaboration as part of a U.S. Department of State-sponsored civic education program. http://www.iearn.org/civics.html.

SOLAM. A project of Schools Online involving Arab and Jewish teachers and students in Israel in dialogue and project work toward building a culture of peace. http://www.schoolsonline.org/whatwedo/israel.htm

Urban Inside View Magazine. "Inside View" seeks to decrease prejudice, increase understanding and promote unity among teens and adults with different religions, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. http://www.iearn.org/projects/inside.html.

Ideas for Globalizing the Classroom

Have a "World" bulletin board related to the subject your teaching: If you are giving a lesson on food habits, have a section of your board for "food" around the world, for example. If you are doing a section on "sports" keep your bulletin updated with what is happening with respect to this/these sport(s) around the world.

Keep a map of the world in your classroom: Ask students to talk about the people and places they know and have visited-either virtually or physically. Mark those spots on the map. Create an international illustrated class diary where students can write about the different places they know about and the people they have met online and in-person. Encourage them to express their feelings and impressions. Add a section for the places they would like to know and discover. Consider also adding a clock or clocks set to the time in the country being studied.

Give a purpose to your communication/partnership; Share it with others: In your lesson, add the "global" component by asking them questions that would require a cross-cultural comparison: "What would happen if we applied the same experiment in ..." Get them curious to know others by using international writing or artwork as a class resource. Make sure students know what is expected; establish clear objectives, an agreed upon timeframe and expected outcomes. It is very important to keep students motivated: engage them in every step of the project, constantly update your project bulletin board and post the messages sent and received. (Keep one section of your bulletin board for time zones, facts about that country and pictures of their partners). Upon completion of the project have your students present their work to others at school. Keep cultural packages exchanged for future classes.

-By Eliane Metni, Coordinator, iEARN-Lebanon

Improving Education

WRITE to Care Framework: Writing and Reading Integrating Technology into Education to Make A Difference in Our World.

By Kristi Rennebohm Franz, Sunnyside Elementary School, USA.

"Children develop language through interaction...they learn to talk by talking to someone who responds...They must therefore learn to write by writing to someone who responds. It will perhaps be possible for us to create classroom communities within school communities in which writing matters because it's done for real reasons by real writers who ache with caring for real response."

- Mem Fox

INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, our primary class has been using email on iEARN and between classrooms in our own school to learn to read and write. We started with reading and writing just text email messages with local to global iEARN students and teachers and now have added website publishing, videotape production, and live video conferencing experiences. Our telecommunications reading, writing, and communication all are focused on exploring curricular topics. We discovered early in this journey that by having children share their classroom curricular experiences through local to global telecommunications, their learning took on energy and inquiry beyond what we had ever imagined. The classroom became a place of "turbocharged" teaching and learning because of being connected to the real world experiences of others with whom we shared a passion for learning as much as we could together!

In the journey of mentoring primary children's use of telecommunications to develop literacy skills, I have developed the WRITE to Care Framework: Writing and Reading Integrating Technology into Education. The purpose of this framework is to encourage children's literacy skill development while participating in meaningful local to global telecommunications projects that make positive differences in their school, community, region, state, country, and the world. We use the iEARN network to generate and participate in WRITE to Care curricular projects.

THE WRITE TO CARE FRAMEWORK

WRITE to Care Framework is a process for integrating literacy (reading, writing, and communication/technology) essential learnings across the curricula in elementary schools. This framework integrates 3 components of teaching and learning:

1. Literacy
2. Curriculum
3. Service Learning

Using the WRITE to Care Framework in the interactive telecommunications environment of iEARN:

- enables students to meet literacy, communication/technology and other content area educational standards
- enables teachers to teach to educational standards
- energizes teaching and learning of teachers and students

The WRITE to Care Framework enables meaningful curricular use of:

- email telecommunications
- web page authoring for sharing curricular projects among students and teachers
- videoconferencing between classrooms and schools

IMPLEMENTATION OF WRITE TO CARE FRAMEWORK

In the iEARN community, teachers around the world connect their classrooms of students to do common curricular projects in partnership with one another. The Global Art Project and the Water Habitat Project are iEARN projects. We have also shared our Puerto Rico Comfort Quilt Project, our Nicaragua Peace Corps World Wise Schools Partnership Project, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace and Friendship Project with other schools on iEARN.

We are finding that when children are writing and reading email on focused curricular topics in order to do collaborative service learning with local to global peers projects, they have a real life purpose and accelerated motivation to develop their literacy skills. They are caring more about writing, while writing about caring!

How and why do classroom curricular experiences, using the WRITE to Care Framework, provide a powerful process for children's literacy and communication development?

With all due respect to virtual reality, there's plenty to work on in the real reality.
-Kristi Rennebohm Franz, iEARN Teacher, USA

First, most children in the primary years have an innate sense of wanting to share what they know with others and learn about their world. When children have an opportunity to communicate with local to global peers as way of making connection to and learning about their world, they are eager to work on the necessary reading and writing skills that enable them to participate in that communication.

Second, when the children are writing about a curricular topic for which they have had meaningful learning experiences, they understand that the purpose of working on literacy skills is to be able to share those learning experiences that they know so well.

Third, the children are writing to known peers with an expectation that their writing will be read and that their writing will bring forth a reply and with telecommunications, the time frame for reply can be immediate. Instead of waiting weeks or months for responses by snail mail, they can have responses within a more immediate time frame, which enables children to have the context, content and purpose of their written messages intact when they receive a response.

Fourth, when the children receive a reply, it increases their motivation and understanding of how and why to work on reading skills, especially integrated semantic, syntactic and phonemic reading strategies, so that they can read the messages they receive. They want to know what their peers have to say. Because the email reply content is on a subject matter for which the children have background knowledge and because they know the text is going to be about a curricular context in which they have ownership and experiences, they access that prior knowledge and known context of what the email is about to predict words in the text.

Fifth, when children receive a reply from peers, those peers often tell them how much they learned from the messages that were sent. The text of reply email often affirms for children the value of the information and ideas that they have communicated. The children realize that their efforts to write about what they know are appreciated and important to others beyond their classroom. When a child realizes that what they know is valued by others, they become motivated to continue learning and writing about the curricular topic.

Sixth, the reply messages often invite further inquiry that inspires ongoing response and sometimes inspires further research in order to respond. Sometimes the inquiries in the email of peers include ideas the children hadn't initially thought about and can't be answered without doing more research on the curricular topic. Often, initiated online collaborative projects take the participating classrooms of children and their teachers beyond the learning goals initially imagined!

Seventh, the online collaboration among local to global peers in the process of doing a meaningful curricular project often leads to taking positive action with what they are learning. In the WRITE to Care projects, children learn to apply what they learn to make positive differences in the world. Being able to apply learning gained through reading, writing, and communicating on curricular topics, enables children to "go beyond information given... to use what they know in new ways and situations to build understanding."*

Eighth, when primary children participate in curricular projects that include the WRITE to Care Framework, they learn that the literacy skills they are learning and using in school make a positive difference in their world.

The WRITE to Care Framework is a continually evolving journey in which the purpose is to unencumber the challenges children encounter in developing their literacy by engaging them in meaningful uses of reading, writing, and communicating that enable them to make positive contributions to their world in the present and the future. The goal of the WRITE to Care Framework is best articulated in the words of Steve E. Miller, author of Civilizing Cyberspace: Policy, Power, and the Information Highway (Addison-Wesley Publishing. 1996)

"It takes a special kind of connection to foster healthy human development, the kind that brings support, care, stability, encouragement, variety and challenge...We need an environment that provides models of mutual respect and assistance so we can learn empathy for others and the interdependence of our collective well-being... Telecommunications can bring us together... it can help create communities... united by common concerns... Telecommunications can allow people of all ages to continue learning and growing and expanding their horizons..which is lifelong learning at its best."

A complete version of the article above, can be found through links on http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/.

* The WRITE to Care Framework curriculum uses the Harvard University Graduate School of EducationTeaching for Understanding Framework which has four main components to curriculum design: Generative Topics, Understanding Goals, Performances of Understanding, Assessments. See http://learnweb.harvard.edu/ent/home/

Improving Education

WRITE to Care Framework Educational Standards, Compiled by Kristi Rennebohm Franz

The WRITE to Care Framework is designed to meet the following Washington State Essential Academic Learnings:

READING K-5

- The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.
- The student understands the meaning of what is read.
- The student reads different materials for a variety of purposes.

2-5

- The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading.

WRITING K-5

- The student writes clearly and effectively.
- The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
- The student understands and uses the steps in the writing process.
- The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.

COMMUNICATION K-5

- The student uses listening and observations skills to gain understanding.
- The student communicates ideas clearly and effectively. The student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others.
- The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of communication/presentations.

The WRITE to Care Framework is designed to meet the following National Standards in Language Arts:

Standard 1: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
Standard 2: Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
Standard 3: Uses grammatically and mechanical conventions in written compositions
Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes
Standard 5: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process
Standard 6: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
Standard 7: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts
Standard 8: Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning

The WRITE to Care Framework is designed to meet the following National Educational Technology Standards

Standard 3: Technology productivity tools:

- Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity

Standard 4: Technology communication tools:

- students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts and other audiences
- students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences

Standard 5: Technology research tools:

- students use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources
- students use technology to process data and report results

Standard 6: Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools:

- students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions
- students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world

For more about the WRITE to Care Framework's allignment to Educatioanal Standards, see http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/Literacy/WRITEtoCare/literacyeducationalstandar.htm
For more information about National Educational Technology Standards, see http://cnets.iste.org/
For links to information about Curriculum Standards see http://www.ed.gov/

Bird Print Writing Process

As our primary class was using a writing software program to work on the Washington State Writing Standards, we initiated a framework for learning the writing process. This developed into the Bird Print Writing Process. For a complete description, see http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/%7Ekfranz/Literacy/birdprintwriting.htm

Puffin Prewrite . . . because the behavior of the puffin flapping its short wings to fly as it decides what to do and where to go next seems somewhat parallel to the process of getting words and short phrases for the ideas of our writing topic into print while we keep thinking about the whole story we want to tell. Puffins also live in colonies with one another, just as a central component of the Prewrite is to collaboratively talk together as a class or in small group about the writing topic.

Swan Draft . . . because the imagery of the swan gracefully floating across the water has metaphorical connection to the goal of doing a writing draft by just letting the sentences for each idea flow onto the page. The main focus is on creating the flowing sentence language for their main ideas with the understanding that editing and revising steps will be the time for close scrutiny of spellings, punctuation, and syntax.

Egret Edit . . . because the egret is a bird that has keen eyes and looks carefully and closely within its habitat to find its food, we decided it would be a good bird name for the first step in the editing process of looking carefully at our writing to identify sound spellings that needed book spellings. Because the egret strikes quickly with its beak to catch its prey, we decided it was a good bird name for the process of using a mouse clicks and keyboard strokes to underline the words needing book spellings. The keen eyes of the egret also remind us to use our keen eyes to look for words that needs capital letters and places where we need periods or other punctuation marks.

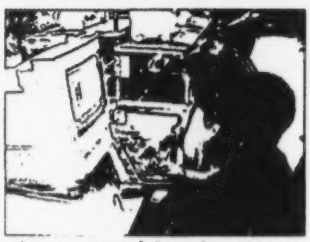
Owl Edit . . . because the owl has keen eyesight for looking carefully in many directions and because it is a symbol of wisdom and knowledge, we decided to use its name for the second step of editing process.

Wren Revise . . . because the wren is a bird that: 1) hops from branch to branch which reminds us of how we can "cut" and "paste" words and sentences in our screen document to move them from place to place; and 2) has a beautiful lyrical song which reminds us to make our words and our sentences together flow like music.

Peregrine Publish . . . because the peregrine falcon is a bird with incredible flying speeds, we decided to use its name for the final step in the writing process in which we make sure our document is ready to share with others and send on the speedy communication of email.

A Classroom Journal...

Each time we make a field trip to Sunnyside Ponds, we write about our observations of what is happening there and what changes we have noticed. As a whole class or in small groups, we write sentences for the pictures in our photo journals. Sometimes each person in the class is assigned a photo to write about for the journal. Then we put everybody's writing together to make the photo journal. Once a week we do writing in the computer lab. When we are writing about the ponds in the computer lab, we put a digital image slide show of our field trip on the big lab monitors so that, when we are writing, we can look up at the pictures of "life at the ponds" and remember what we saw.



Sometimes we work in pairs on our writing. We talk together about what we want to say. Then, while one person does the keyboarding, the other person is the editor who checks the words on the screen. We take turns being keyboarder and editor.

Sometimes, we work on our own. We each have our own computer disk so we can work on our writing in the computer lab and on our classroom computers. Each child does pond writing using our "Bird Print Writing Process". Each child's writing goes into his or her own individual writing portfolios.

We listen to each other's writing to learn what each other was thinking about the ponds. We help each other edit our writing and help each other practice our reading. We conference with our teacher or parent volunteers to revise and edit our writing. We put our finished writing into our writing portfolio binder notebooks. We send our writing as email and we make booklet of our email messages to use for classroom reading lessons. At our parent conference time, we each read our water habitat writing and email messages to our parents.

Making a Difference

YouthCaN (Youth Communicating and Networking)

In addition to meeting a specific curriculum need, every project proposed by teachers and students in iEARN has to answer the question, how will this project affect the quality of life on the planet? That vision and purpose is the glue that holds iEARN together. Through participation in iEARN projects, students develop the habit of getting involved in community issues. One example of students working together to make a difference is YouthCaN, a youth run organization that uses technology to inspire, connect, and educate people worldwide about environmental issues. Through a network of conferences, activities and events, YouthCaN unites environmentally active youth to exchange ideas about the environment and empower others to make a difference in their own communities. YouthCaN is a collaboration between iEARN, NYU, the American Museum of Natural History, and various environmental clubs and organizations. Following are just a few project examples.

Seeds of Change in Southern Florida

In 1992 after Hurricane Andrew devastated southern Florida, teacher Rowena Gerber and her elementary class at Miami Country Day School decided to grow trees to re-leaf decimated southern Florida communities. At year's end, 2,000 trees, each bedecked with a booklet of students' poems, were donated to hurricane victims. This project was the beginning of the school's long-standing relationship with the Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO) which provides seeds, farm supplies and training to small-scale farmers and urban gardeners in developing countries. In partnership with ECHO, the Miami students began experimenting with growing plants that are needed in developing countries. They will soon be providing seeds to farmers in the tropics, among them the native Florida seminole pumpkin and the amazing moringa tree which is fast-growing and a rich source of food, vitamins and medicine.

The kids also grow herbs, and have formed their own non-profit corporation, Project Hope, which sells plants and herb-infused vinegars. Through Project Hope, students are contributing to two solar cooking initiatives in Haiti, a country that is seriously deforested and where finding cooking fuel is a daily challenge for many impoverished citizens. Proceeds from the students' plant and vinegar sales help to fund a revolving loan that enables Haitian villagers to purchase solar cookers; donated funds also support a solar cooker store and information center in Port-Au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti. As part of their studies, each grade at Miami Country Day School designs and builds solar cookers, from primitive crayon melters made by the four-year-olds to more sophisticated inventions designed by fifth graders.

A network of 87 schools in Port-Au-Prince are now implementing gardening and solar cooking education, having visited and seen the success of the Miami Country Day School program. Gerber's school will work this year with a Haitian teacher to design food systems activities and curricula for Haiti. Gerber is also working on ways to distribute seeds and sprouters (inexpensive plastic devices used to sprout seeds) to refugee camps and to needy Haitian communities as a quick and efficient way to enhance health and food security. These personal ties to Haitian communities, enriched through visits, letters, email and picture exchanges, enhance the Miami students' agricultural and multicultural understanding.

Miami Country Day School now has a garden for each pre-K to fifth grade class, along with shared arbor and green house projects designed by the students. Experiments and other enrichment activities take place at the nearby lab of the Abess Center for Environmental Studies. Activities related to gardening and solar cooking have been integrated into the curriculum in several ways. Students receive instruction in science and social studies through working on food systems, and the Florida Solar Energy Center curricula on solar energy and alternative fuels ensures that solar-cooking work is also an in-depth science exploration. Nutrition, biology, Florida history, Haitian culture-many other subjects have come alive.

They are genuinely doing something to help other people, and that makes them feel good. When they sell vinegar, it's something that they have done from scratch: they've grown the plants, they've made the labels, they've made the whole thing. It's not like selling chocolates for a good cause-here they can see how their own efforts and ideas can benefit other people.
-Rowena Gerber, EARTH Teacher, USA

"It has been rewarding to watch the children learn and to listen to their insights and discoveries-their hand's on, nose-on, mouth-on, and both-feet-in approach to this thing we call science." Gerber notes. For the last five years, student gardeners, designers, and engineers from Miami Country Day School have presented their work at YouthCaN, an international gathering of young environmentalists at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. The school is working on a curriculum guide to document how Gerber's activities with students address the national and state standards.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the program is that the students learn the feasibility and value of making a postive difference in the world. As Gerber notes, "They are genuinely doing something to help other people, and that makes them feel good. When they sell vinegar, it's something that they have done from scratch: they've grown the plants, they've made the labels, they've made the whole thing. It's not like selling chocolates for a good cause-here they can see how their own efforts and ideas can benefit other people."

Credits to Green Teacher. Excerpted from, "Teaching About Food Systems," by Carmela Federico, Green Teacher # 65, Summer 2001 edition. Subscriptions cost $24/year (4 issues) from: Green Teacher, PO Box 452, Niagara Falls, NY 14304, (416) 960-1244, www.greenteacher.com.

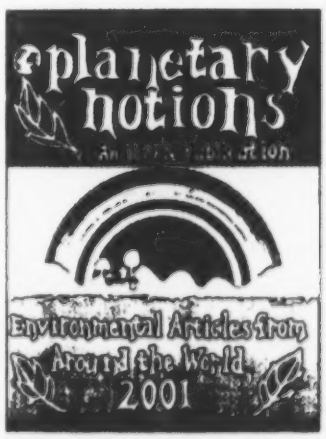
Additional YouthCaN Projects include

To learn more, visit http:www.nyu.edu/projects/youthcan

Solar Cooking Project Description

Name of Project: Solar Olympics
Description: Participants are invited to experiment with alternative energy uses by making, testing and using solar cookers. Recipes, construction tips, experiments and research findings will be shared on line and compiled on a web site.
Ages: All ages are invited to participate.
Curriculum Areas: Fully integrated to include environmental science, economics, ethics, physics, law, computer science, chemistry, philosophy, earth science, public relations, sociology, engineering, medicine, politics, agriculture, journalism, and art.
Timeframe: This project will continue indefinitely. Results will be shared at international conferences through demonstrations led by participants.
Classroom activities may include:
-Students will design original solar oven
-Students will compare insulation materials
-Students will compare the effects of climate changes on solar cooking
-Students will write letters to local newspapers about the benefits of using solar energy
-Students will create a web page about solar cooking
-Students will write and present a public service announcement for radio or TV about the need to conserve energy, deforestation issues in third world countries, the problems with fossil fuels, the greenhouse effect, or global warming
-Students will compile a solar cookbook with tips on converting standard recipes to solar oven recipes
Outcome: Student contributions will be posted on a web site.
Website:
http://www.miamicountryday.org/aces/aces_resources.html

Planetary Notions is an environmental project, currently facilitated by students at Stuyvesant High School in New York City. The project offers students around the world an opportunity to publish articles in an annual magazine so that they can share their views about the world's environmental health and how to protect it. In addition to articles, Planetary Notions facilitates discussion about these issues through an online forum. The publication includes summaries of the major discussions from the year.



- **Labs Alive** - Students share in scientific research and classroom practice with a focus on environmental issues.
- **Pollution: A Menace Posed by Mankind** - Discussion of the various types of pollution problems as seen by local / regional /global perspectives.
- **Waterways: Local to Global Water Habitats and Resources** - Students exchange longitudinal observations and service learning action projects on their local water habitats and resources.
- **Waste-Problem or Possibility?** - This project researches how we are treating waste in our communities.
- **Medicine in Our Backyard** - A project emphasizing preservation and exploration of the possibilities of medicinal plants.

Making a Difference

iEARN projects all share a common purpose: to make a difference in the world. This takes many different forms as seen in the incredible diversity of projects across the network. Below is an activity, developed by two iEARN students as part of their work with YouthCan, which provides an example of how a group or class can work together to identify an issue and develop a related action step or project idea.

A YouthCaN Presentation Activity For Facilitators. by Wileyda and Michael, ages 15 & 17.

Purpose of the Activity: The Activity was meant for a workshop that was being facilitated by YouthCaN (YC) students. The participants of the workshop are either new to YC or have never known of, and want to find out about it.

Overview of the Activity: This activity incorporates the idea that interactive workshops are more fun and educational than lecture –style workshops, and will get the participants talking and active. This will keep the participants engaged, which will help them understand the basic purpose and functionality of YC.

Dividing the audience into smaller groups symbolizes the community groups that participate in YC. They are essentially isolated until they meet online and when the YC Conference brings them together. There they share ideas and experiences, which they may use in their own efforts.

Prelude to the Activity: Explain the activity, and the requirements. Here is a sample explanation:

"Okay everyone. We are now going to make this a bit more fun by giving you an activity. This activity is collaborative, so please on my mark divide yourselves into X to Y people per group. Start off by choosing a leader for the group. This person should make things go smoothly, and make sure that no one is talking for too long.

First you will each take a turn describing an environmental issue in your community. Second you must, as a group, choose ONE of the issues. Third, collaborate and speak about how, as a small group, you can solve the issue, or at least make it better. Fourth prepare it for presenting to the entire audience (not just your group, but all the groups). Fifth, choose one or two people to present your dilemma and solution. Sixth, support the presenters by applauding. This is not a debate."

YouthCaN Microcosm: Now you can begin the Activity itself.

-After giving them a general introduction, have them divide themselves into X to Y people groups. The X and Y amount should be calculated, depending on the amount of participants, the amount of space the groups will have to sit/stand and work with and any other considerations. Tell them to choose their leader.

-Then, tell them the **First** step: Take turns briefly describing each individual's community issues among themselves. Take this time to go around the groups and clarify any questions, and make sure they are moving along at a good pace.

-Calculate how much time each step 'should' take. Occasionally interrupt by just saying "you should now be up-to this part".

-The **Second** step of the activity is to choose an issue that was just discussed in the 'go-around'. This could be done by having the group members vote.

-The **Third** step is to brainstorm some solutions to solve the issue. And as a group come to a conclusive solution.

-The **Fourth** step is to choose one or two representatives from the group to present the environmental issue and solution to the rest of the groups when called for by the facilitators (you).

-Warn them that they have Z amount of minutes left. Count down the minutes. Then, get their attention and bring them back into 'workshop mode'. You could do this by asking "so how did it go?" they might laugh in response--that's a good thing.

-Then ask for some groups to volunteer their representatives to present their work and discuss it with the rest of the groups.

Wrapping-up the Activity: Once the selected groups have presented, make sure you thank them for their work. Consider this a Microcosm of YouthCaN, because that is what we do. Groups from all over the world do their own thing trying to make a difference to help the World. YouthCaN brings them together to share their experiences and inspire others. This activity symbolizes what YouthCaN is. You could point this out.

-For more detail, see http://community-2.webtv.net/Mabus3/youthcan/

OCT 15

In addition to the environmental projects of YouthCaN, students in iEARN are making a difference in many other projects

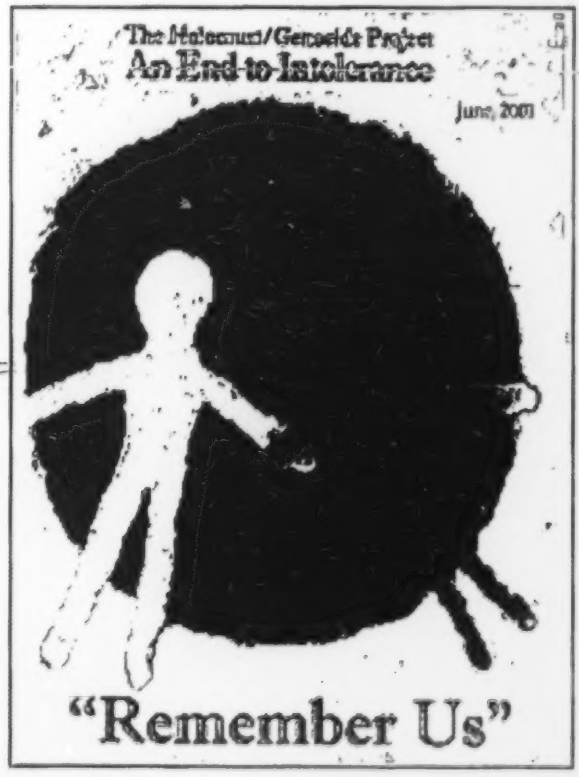
The Bullying Project is designed to help youth around the world cope with being bullied and teased. Students can contribute their personal stories, poems, oral stories (audio files), music, drawings, photographs, animations and films. http://www.bullying.org

AIDSWEB: Social Action For Education with Today's Youth is an exchange program to develop Internet-based HIV/AIDS education curriculum to support meaningful community action projects among U.S. and African educators and students and their peers worldwide. The program is supported by the US Dept of State, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and is in collaboration with World Links. http://www.iearn.org/projects/aidsweb.html

The Child Labour Project is a youth collaboration in research and awareness-raising on the issues of child labour and exploitation. http://www.iearn.org.au/clp/

The Doors to Peace (Puertas Para la Paz) Project involves exchange, reflection and activities which contribute to modifying the local and global reality in order to achieve a culture based on peace. http://www.iearn.org/projects/paz.html

ALEXANDRA, self-Portrait at 14
The Bullying Project



The First Peoples Project links up indigenous people around the world to conduct an exchange of ideas, cultures, and art. The project includes a Humanitarian Effort, initiated by indigenous students and their teachers to assist indigenous communities in meeting educational, social and economic needs. http://www.iEARN.org.au/fp

The Holocaust/Genocide Project (HGP) promotes education and awareness, and encourages the application of this knowledge in a way which makes a positive difference in the world. Each year, the project participants publish a magazine called *An End to Intolerance*. http://www.iearn.org/hgp

UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights has highlighted iEARN's role in combatting racism through Internet-based education. Says the Commissioner's Report, EDUCATING CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGAINST RACISM, "iEARN is not solely devoted to anti-racism projects: others of its projects focus on the environment, on poverty, and on child labour, to take just a few examples. Still, its anti-racism work is prominent, and far-reaching. Of interest here is the combination of the Internet context – promising the widest possible dissemination of anti-racism materials adaptable to local contexts by local teachers and students – with the formal classroom setting, where materials from everywhere can be marshaled, developed, and contextualized for local needs." http://www.iearn.org/racismreportfinaldoc.pdf

Suggestions for Successful Project Work

The key to successful project work is developing effective relationships with educators around the iEARN network. It is extremely important to establish human relationships among teachers to facilitate the challenging task of collaborating on projects across diverse educational systems, time zones and school year schedules. iEARN places a high priority on building these relationships both online and during face-to-face meetings of teachers and students. Below are some resources and tips to help you make the most of your collaborative project work on the Internet .

Suggestions for Successful Project Participation

• **Try to create a globally aware classroom/school environment.** The collaborative, community nature of iEARN may provide a very different online experience to those young people who are used to "anonymous" correspondences on the web. Having systems for students to better understand the interconnectedness of the world will make their online collaboration with global peers much richer. E-mail messages come to life through maps, and a basic understanding about the background and culture of their online peers.

• **Create a system for peer-editing in your class.** Preparation and transmission should be seen as two different tasks. Preparing the message, researching and creating material to be transmitted, is a very important part of the whole process. Students will be writing with real purpose for a very real audience. The presence of this audience provides an incentive for students to produce the most effective communication possible. Consider creating a feedback process where students have the opportunity to comment on each others work, peer edit, and then revise accordingly.

• **Communicate.** Even if you can't contribute for weeks, send a note to say so. That way, your partners know that you are still interested in participating.

• **Ensure language is cross cultural.** How much of what is being sent needs explanation or description for an audience from a different culture? Slang or colloquial language needs to be used carefully. Translating student writing into a context that is most universally understandable can open interesting discussions in your classroom.

Visit the online handbook for suggestions on how to begin international online collaboration
http://www.iearn.org/professional/prof_collaboration.html

Suggestions for Successful Project Facilitation

• **Use online forums instead of direct e-mail whenever possible.** Forums accommodate a variety of school schedules by archiving messages and allowing new contributors to see the project's progression, understand who is involved, and whether the work will be of interest to them. And, by using the iEARN forums, you are enabling participants to participate by e-mail or by way of the web, on discussion boards hosted on servers around the world, thus keeping cost to a minimum.

• **Encourage discussion and interaction among participants.** As a project facilitator, part of your role, and that of your students, is to facilitate interaction among participants. This increases the opportunities for students to receive feedback on their writing, so that responsibility for responding to messages doesn't just fall on the project facilitators. If participants respond to 2 other messages for every one that they post, every student who posts a message will receive a response.

• **Involve partner schools and students in leadership roles.** Appointing international student editors and facilitators not only provides additional sources of feedback to contributors, but it also helps other students to see ways that they can take leadership roles. Participants may even choose to share the role of compiling project materials into a final publication, thus allowing a variety of classrooms the experience of analyzing and presenting a

• **Update project information periodically.** This helps existing participants and insures that new participants will not be referring to outdated information about the project.

• **Participate in another project.** This is a great way to meet other participants, and learn about the many projects initiated by teachers and students throughout the world. In this way, your classroom truly becomes a global community member that can draw on the breadth of the network as your classroom develops throughout the year.

iEARN Professional Development

Hands-On Workshops

iEARN offers hands-on face-to-face workshops for teachers who want to integrate online collaborative projects. iEARN facilitators work closely with participating schools and teachers to design workshops that meet their particular needs and interests. These are hands-on workshops are led by iEARN facilitators with up to 8-10 years experience in online collaborative project work. Workshops are participant driven with the goal of enabling educators to begin working on projects and developing a support network in their schools. iEARN staff are also available for on-going staff development and technical support. To schedule a workshop write to workshops@us.iearn.org

Online Professional Development

iEARN-USA offers online professional development courses for teachers in the US and abroad to integrate collaborative projects that meet local/state/national standards and explore how they can bring local issues into their teaching. The eight week courses enable educators to integrate a short term curriculum specific project into their classroom, and plan how they can continue with a longer term project. The courses are facilitated by iEARN teachers. Visit http://www.iearn.org/professional/online.html

[illegible]tional Resources

[illegible]ws, [illegible]d Resources for Discussing September 11th

• **"re:constructions"** is an on-line resource from **MIT's Program in Comparative Media Studies** about the media's role in covering the events of 11 September, 2001 and their aftermath. http://web.mit.edu/cms/reconstructions/introduction.html

• **Educators for Social Responsibility** has put together guides to help teachers discuss recent events with young people, as well as how to address anti-Arab/Muslim bias. http://www.esrmetro.org/

• **The Education Development Center** has created a mini-curriculum entitled "**Beyond Blame: Reacting to theTerrorist Attack**" for middle and high school students. http://www.edc.org/spotlight/schools/beyondblame.htm

• **The Coalition of Essential Schools' "Framing Discussions of Terrible Events,"** offers questions that teachers can use to frame dialogue about events surrounding September 11th. http://www.essentialschools.org/pubs/ematters/emq_sept11.html

• **PBS** resources are designed to help communities understand and cope with the September 11th tragedy. http://www.pbs.org/americaresponds/

• **Teaching for Change**, from **NECA** offers articles on US foreign policy, links to Arab, Arab-American, and Islamic organizations, as well as to alternative media sites. http://www.teachingforchange.org/Sept11.htm

• **The Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Program** contains a collection of materials dealing with tolerance in the classroom and beyond. http://www.tolerance.org/teach

Resources for Studying Islam and Muslim Culture

• **The Detroit Free Press** has put together a guide entitled "**100 Questions and Answers About Arab Americans.**" http://www.freep.com/jobspage/arabs.htm

• **The Middle East Research and Information Project** publishes the Middle East Report, and offers background for teachers. http://www.merip.org

• **Omar Center For Cultural and Educational Outreach**. A guide for educators to help students understand how Islam condemns violence and terrorism. http://www.qgs.com/OMar_CD/

• **Islam 101** is an educational site on Islam, its way of life, civilization and culture, including an introductory course on Islam. http://www.islam101.com/

• **The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)** is a civil rights organization committed to defending the rights of people of arab descent and promoting their rich cultural heritage. ADC also offers a wealth of classroom resources for challenging bias against people of Arab descent. http://www.adc.org/

Global Studies Resources

• **Choices for the 21st Century Education Project** at **Brown University** is posting curriculum materials on the attack as well as background on international relations and other pertinent issues. http://www.choices.edu/issues/

• **The American Forum for Global Education** is focused on giving young Americans a global perspective as part of their euducational background. http://www.globaled.org/

• **The Center for Teaching International Relations (CTIR).** Programs and publications that promote a better understanding of the world. Resources may be borrowed for up to two weeks free of charge with a small deposit. http://www.du.edu/ctir/

• **World Wise Schools** has lesson plans sorted K-12, subject and area specific: http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/educators/lessons.html, http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/educators/culture.html

Map Resources

• **National Geographic.** http://www.nationalgeographic.com/

• **Peterson Project Map.** With the traditional Mercator map , Greenland and Africa look the same size. But in reality Africa is 14 times larger! In response to such discrepancies, Dr. Arno Peters created a new world map that dramatically improves the accuracy of how we see the Earth. http://www.ncccusa.org/friend/maps.html

Connecting with Classrooms Globally

In order to most effectively respond to the recent outpouring of interest among teachers and students around the United States to connect globally, iEARN has taken the lead in organizing a consortium of groups whose aim it is to create links among youth worldwide.

The Friendship Through Education Consortium is committed to creating opportunities that facilitate online and offline interactions between the youth of the world, inside and outside of classrooms, in order to build a culture of peace in which the dignity and rights of all human beings are respected. The Consortium was launched with a commitment to expanded links between U.S. schools and those throughout the world, including in Islamic countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Bahrain and Afghan refugee camps. We will provide information on how students can link students through letters, email, art, collaborative projects and exchanges to foster mutual respect and greater understanding of cultural differences.

http://www.friendshipthrougheducation.org

The consortium includes: The UN's Cyberschoolbus, ePals Classroom Exchange, Global SchoolNet Foundation, iEARN-USA, NetAid, People to People International, Schools Online, Sister Cities International, US Fund for UNICEF, and the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools Program of the Peace Corps. iEARN is the organization responsible for coordinating the consortium members.

Schools interested in participating can visit the website and contact the members of the consortium, indicating their interest in connecting with another class. Additionally, schools will be able to access all programs offered by members of the consortium.

Contact Information: Friendship Through Education Consortium, http://www.friendshipthrougheducation.org, friendship@us.iearn.org, tel 212/870-2693

iEARN

iEARN, the International Education and Resource Network, enables young people (ages 5-19) to use the Internet and other new technologies to engage in collaborative online educational projects. These projects both enhance learning and address issues of global importance.

More than 400,000 students in over 95 countries are working together in iEARN to make a positive impact on the world. These students interact across religious, cultural and racial differences as part of their educational experience.

This interaction has been at the heart of iEARN's work since its inception in 1988, when it pioneered online project-based learning between students on "opposite sides" of the Cold War. In the present state of our world, the importance of this work is no longer questioned. iEARN is one of the most direct ways for you to respond to global conflict and misunderstanding -- by assisting more youth to effectively dialogue about and act to promote tolerance and understanding in the world.

CONNECTING YOUTH
Making a Difference in the World

iEARN-USA. 475 Riverside Dr, Suite 540. NYC, NY 10115. p: 212-870-2693.
email: iearn@us.iearn.org. web: http://www.iearn.org

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